



THORNLEA READS

Library Newsletter

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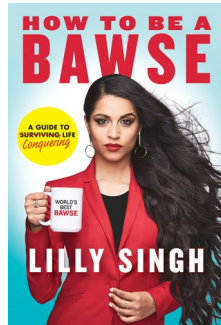
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March 2017

Welcome to our Semester Two Library Newsletter! We at the Thornlea Library are very lucky to have our first Co-op Student, Rahim Moorani, working with us. Rahim is working in our Communications department developing our social media and our newsletter. This month's newsletter is full of amazing articles about the latest events that we hosted, such as an alumni visit and our Syrian refugee guest speaker. You will also find great book reviews and recommendations. Enjoy and come by the library!

-Domenico Capilongo, teacher-librarian

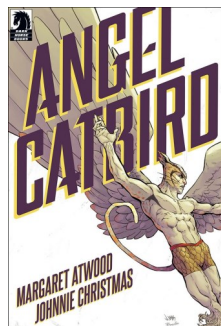
NEW RELEASES:



How To Be A Bawse—Lilly Singh

From actress, comedian, and YouTube sensation Lilly Singh (a.k.a. ||Superwoman||) comes a guide to being a *bawse* - a person who exudes confidence, reaches goals, gets hurt efficiently, and smiles genuinely because they've fought through it all and made it out the other side. Told in her hilarious, bold voice that's inspired over nine million fans, and using stories from her own life to illustrate her message, Lilly proves there are no shortcuts to success.

Thornlea Library is giving away a copy of this book—stay tuned to our Twitter account for more details!



Angel Catbird—Margaret Atwood

Margaret Atwood's first graphic novel follows a young genetic engineer named Strig Feleedus who is accidentally mutated by his own experiment and merges with the DNA of a cat and an owl. What follows is a humorous, action-driven, pulp-inspired superhero adventure—with a lot of cat puns.



L'Horizon À L'Envers—Marc Levy

Où se situe notre conscience ? Est-ce qu'on peut la transférer et la sauvegarder? Hope, Josh et Luke, étudiants en neurosciences, forment un trio inséparable, lié par une amitié inconditionnelle et une idée de génie. Lorsque l'un des trois est confronté à une mort imminente, ils décident d'explorer l'impossible et de mettre en oeuvre leur incroyable projet.

Hours: 8 AM - 4 PM



<http://bit.ly/2mr10AB>



@thornleareads

THORNLEA ALUMNI RETURN TO TALK REAL WITH GRADUATING CLASS

by Rahim Moorani, Library Communications Co-Op Student



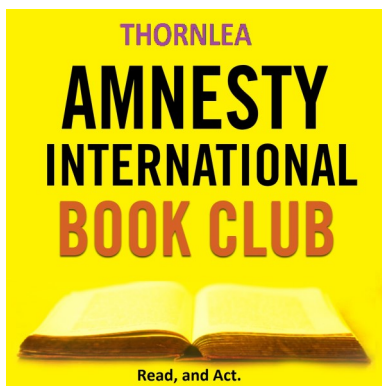
Speakers, left to right: Ben Shendelman, Duaa Zahra, Iva Pivalica, Jonathan Gould, Kiana Courtney, Courtney Tidd, Davena Montague, Sumayya Dato, Kaiyu Gao, Andrew Seto, Brandon Kan, Rachael Bull, Alexander Dover.

On February 22, thirteen former Thornlea students paid a visit to their high school to discuss their experiences in college and university with current grade 12 students.

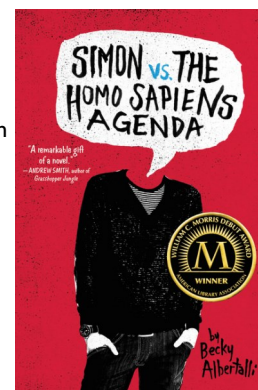
The alumni, like good friends, made sure to keep the mood light, making jokes frequently and speaking highly of both Thornlea and their present schools. They offered a lot of advice to our Grade 12s, notably to learn to manage their time & money, to use the help offered by their college or university (although it will be their responsibility to find it), and not to be shy with their professors. Learning how to make & keep good friends while staying in touch with old ones was another topic that was discussed.

Although they warned of some of the challenges posed by university, such as stress and the commute, the alumni reassured any nervous students that success is possible for those who work hard.

“It was good to hear, especially from people who are in university, what that life is like and what to expect,” said Anthony Landry, a student who was in the audience. In general, the speakers encouraged the grade 12 students to go to college or university, saying that it is a good place to learn and that the freedom and independence are a welcome change. Hopefully, some of the students who were in the audience will come back to Thornlea next year to share their experiences with next year’s graduating class.



Thornlea Amnesty International Book Club’s next book will be *Simon Vs. The Homo Sapiens Agenda* by Becky Albertalli! The club will be discussing the book on Friday, April 7th at lunch in the library seminar room, so there’s still time to read it! If you’re interested, let Ms. Swailes or Ms. Hanff know!



SYRIAN REFUGEE VISITS THORNLEA SS LIBRARY

by Rahim Moorani, Library Communications Co-Op Student



Ousama, a Syrian refugee, speaks to Thornlea students about his experiences in the war-torn country of Syria.

Thornlea Amnesty International Book Club, founded in 2016, is a club that reads books and then plans events related to the books' central themes. Their most recent novel, Chris Cleave's *Little Bee*, focuses on a Nigerian refugee's experiences as she flees her country and the struggles she faces after landing in Britain. Inspired by this novel and by the conflict in Syria, the Book Club decided to invite a Syrian refugee to Thornlea to speak about his experiences.

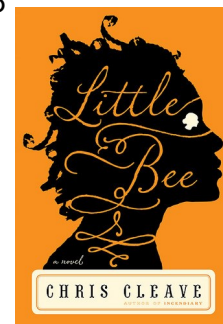
On February 28th, students from three classes each paid \$2 to the Book Club to come to the library to hear a Syrian refugee speak about his life. Ousama, the speaker (who has asked for his personal details to be changed in order to protect his family in Syria), arrived in Canada eight months ago when a Toronto-based church sponsored his journey. The money raised by the Amnesty International Book Club will be donated to a joint project by Har Zion, a local synagogue, and the Imam Mahdi Islamic Centre, a local mosque, to provide aid to another family of eight recently arrived Syrian refugees.

Ousama opened his presentation by sharing some startling facts with the audience. One such fact: 6.2 million people have been forced out of their homes into refugee camps within Syria, while 4.8 million Syrians have been pushed out of their country altogether. Ousama said that, to escape this conflict, many Syrians attempt dangerous trips to neighbouring countries, but many don't survive. He is one of those people who has moved through many

countries to stay safe, having lived in Syria, Jordan, and Turkey, among others. He also explained that the war in Syria is the worst humanitarian crisis since WWII and that it's not likely to end soon because the conflict is very complex, involving many countries with many dissonant interests.

The speaker spent a lot of time telling the audience personal stories to give them a better idea of what life is really like in the Syrian war. In Syria, he has a mother and two sisters, but, for his safety, they forced him to leave them behind after the Syrian government identified him as someone who had smuggled medicine into besieged areas. (Fortunately, his family in Syria is now safe.) Ousama became very emotional when telling some of his stories. One story that nearly brought him to tears was that of a young boy in a refugee camp at which he volunteered. The boy happily dug his nails into the mud to write because the camp lacked the pencils and paper he needed to practice his math. When Syria becomes more peaceful, Ousama wishes to go back to help rebuild the country and heal all who have been affected.

Ousama closed his presentation with advice to students on how they can help the situation in Syria. They can befriend refugees who have come to Canada to make them feel welcome, donate to a humanitarian organization, and use social media to attract the attention of politicians who can push for a ceasefire. Students can also volunteer to help refugees in many ways: they can teach new Canadians English, they can help them adjust to their community, and they can work with the humanitarian organizations in the GTA. Ousama warned students not to jump to conclusions about the Syrian conflict based on what the media says; much of it does not provide in-depth coverage of the issue and often paints the countries involved in a good light even if they are harming civilians. Finally, he encouraged the audience to work hard with other young people to clear corruption out of politics and work even harder to keep politicians honest. We wish Ousama and his family the best going forward and thank him for his time.



Chris Cleave's Little Bee.

THE BIRTH OF A LIVING WALL

by Rahim Moorani, Library Communications Co-Op Student

In the corner of the library, behind the reading area's cozy chairs, a collection of plants in plastic bottles hangs from the window. It's called the Living Wall and it's home to a variety of plants: flowers, spider plants, onions, and even baby lettuce. The Living Wall sprouted from the minds of the Eco Club, supported by TWIC (Thornlea's Wellness Initiative Council). Its care is being assisted by Mrs. Steffanie Wang, an educational assistant in Thornlea's Acquired Brain Injury program who cares deeply for the environment. Right now, says Mrs. Wang, the Wall is still in its early stages and is "just a demonstration that it *can be done.*" Even though the plants receive less light than they would elsewhere in the school, the Wall's library environment keeps them safe from outside groups who use the building on evenings and weekends. This may change as the project grows, however.

The idea has its roots in the Eco Club's desire to make Thornlea a greener school. The gardening style used by the Living Wall saves space and conserves water: instead of a normal garden's horizontal placement, the Wall's plants are stacked vertically, allowing unused water to drain from the top plants to feed the ones below. This water doesn't need to be fresh either - it can be sourced from anywhere, from used cooking water to rainwater. The school's technology department designed and created the



The Living Wall.

planters from water bottles that would otherwise have been in landfills, making the Wall even more eco-friendly.

These kinds of projects will become more important in the future, Mrs. Wang explains. Canada has relatively little arable land because of its rocky landscape and wide Arctic expanse, so it has the problem of needing to import a lot of its food. This leads to higher food costs, an issue that will only worsen as our population blooms. The local growing of food boosts the Canadian economy and helps people sustain themselves, two economic factors that will be important for future generations. Programs like the Living Wall can contribute positively to both.

The Wall is still young, but Mrs. Wang has a bright vision for its future. Right now, only nine plants are growing, but she hopes that, once the idea has caught on, all of Thornlea's staff and students will be able to care for their own plant. "Everyone will be able to pick whatever plant they want to and do what they want with it," she says. When the year ends, everyone will take their plants home so that the Wall can be reborn when the next school year starts. Food grown on the Wall can be used by the cafeteria to make food for the students, helping Thornlea support itself. Students who want to help the Living Wall blossom can talk to the head teachers of the Eco Club, Mrs. Ross and Mrs. Phillips-MacNeil; to Mrs. Wang herself, who can be found in room 110; or to TWIC.

A RUFF LIFE: REVIEW OF ANDRÉ ALEXIS' *FIFTEEN DOGS*

by Rahim Moorani, Library Communications Co-Op Student

Rating: 8.2/10 (A-)



Cover of *Fifteen Dogs*.



The Thornlea Library is now offering a Bookmobile service! We will come to your class with book selections and a scanner so students can sign out or renew books from within the classroom! Teachers can request a type of book or books on a specific topic (e.g. French novels, non-fiction novels on Canada's role in WWI). Teachers, if you want the Bookmobile to visit your class, email one of the library staff!

André Alexis' 2016 novel *Fifteen Dogs*, winner of CBC's Canada Reads 2017, follows fifteen dogs who are given human intelligence by Apollo and Hermes, two Greek gods who are curious as to whether or not other animals would be as depressed as humans are if they had the same level of intellect. Apollo believes that none of the newly intelligent dogs will die happy; the book follows the dogs' lives to see if he is right.

Fifteen Dogs offers an interesting, often educational take on the development of a variety of aspects of human society. One of the more unique evolutions is that of the dogs' political system. Most of it comes from struggles for dominance, a canine value that becomes much more interesting to read about when human intelligence is applied to the fighters. Their battles give a historical view into the development of human politics, as much of our politics stems from the desire to dominate. The book also spends a lot of time on the importance of thought: can intelligence be considered a disability? Many of the dogs think so, as thought leads to a lot of pressure to fit in and act like "normal" dogs. This is another issue that many humans struggle with and another theme in the book that many readers will enjoy. Readers who battle mental illness, like some of these dogs do, will find comfort in the fact that they are not alone. Some people may find these moments hard to read, though.

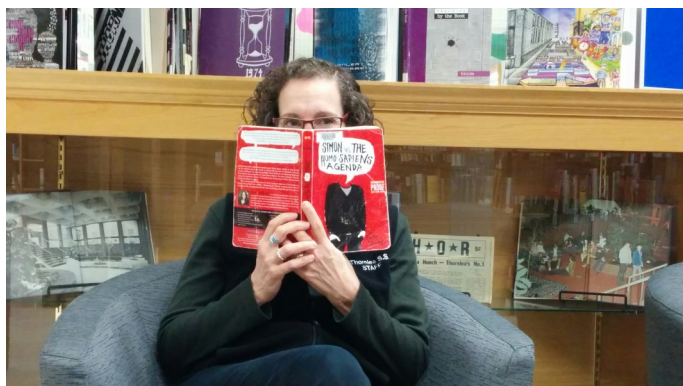
The book asks many philosophical questions as well. The dogs eventually begin to develop their own religion, which can help readers understand why there is so much variety between and within human societies across the world. The canines also begin to notice things about how societies are constructed, leading them to question the actions of humans and other dogs. Perhaps the most important question asked, though, is what being human means. If other animals can receive human intelligence and develop human-like societies, who are we to say that they are not also human? Are we really as special as we think we are?

History and philosophy are not all that the book explores, although it does spend a lot of time on them. *Fifteen Dogs* shows what being a pet is like from the pet's perspective, which is sometimes quite entertaining, especially for pet owners. Many of the dogs' thoughts on humans are also funny and certainly made me question a few things. Because the main characters are all dogs, however, I sometimes found it hard to relate to them. A lot of the dogs' thoughts and the actions they took are just plain confusing, which detracted from my enjoyment of a really thought-provoking book. Most of these thoughts and actions are caused by the dogs' nature, however, so readers with a better understanding of dogs than me may get more enjoyment from the book than I did. Overall, *Fifteen Dogs* is a very interesting, very educational, often entertaining book that I would recommend to any dog lover or anyone with an interest in human history or philosophy.

GET TO KNOW, VOLUME I: MS. HANFF, TEACHER-LIBRARIAN

by Rahim Moorani, Library Communications Co-Op Student

Anyone who's been to the library knows Ms. Hanff, the head teacher-librarian. What they may not know, though, is why someone would want to be a teacher-librarian and what they want for students. To learn a little bit more about what teacher-librarians do and what's changing in the library, I spoke to Ms. Hanff.



Ms. Hanff hiding behind a book.

Ms. Debra Hanff began teaching English in 1985. She loved talking with her students about literature, calling the combination of literature and teaching her “big passion in life”. In the early ‘90s, she took additional teaching courses to become a teacher-librarian and began splitting her schedule between English and the library. The English classroom and the library are “the perfect places to work if you want to share a love of reading with students,” she says.

Ms. Hanff started working as a teacher-librarian at Thornlea when she first came in the fall of 1999. She is currently in her 32nd year of teaching and her 18th year at the school. In 1999, she says, things were quite different. For one, there were as many as 2000 students in the school when she started. For the fall of 2017, though, despite its high ranking in this year's Fraser Report, Thornlea expects only around 900 students, which Ms. Hanff says is because the area around the school is aging. She prefers the smaller number of students, though, because teachers and students can get to know each other better, creating more of a “family feeling” in the school. The school's population was always wonderfully diverse, but is even more so now, she says. She also explains that Thornlea has undergone a lot of physical changes since she arrived. Some examples of such changes: there used to be a large group of portables near the current tech wing, the

library had more spots for books than for students, and the school had even fewer windows than it does now.

A lot has changed regarding the library's role too since Ms. Hanff started. It's “gone from being a print-based information centre to a student-centered learning commons.” Ms. Hanff also says that the way students use the library is changing. It's “not just a place to find stuff - more a place to do stuff,” she explains. Thornlea's library used to be a quiet, academic place for information collection; now it's a place where students meet to do schoolwork using print and digital resources, find great books, plan and partake in events, and relax. This has changed her job: the most critical role of teacher-librarians now is, in her opinion, to teach students how to evaluate information for usefulness, accuracy, reliability, and authority.

Ms. Hanff hopes Thornlea's library will continue to improve under her watch, but attributes its current success to her colleagues (Ms. Swailes, Mr. Capilongo, and Ms. Chan), to the support of the Administration, and to the school's students. One of her plans is to continue working with her colleagues and students to invite special guests to speak so that “students will learn valuable life lessons they are not going to forget.” The library will also continue to grow its selection of non-fiction eBooks and expand the space that students can use to work, read, and relax. The library staff want the library to be a hub for all students and staff and recognise that it is “more than just for research and learning.”

As a librarian, Ms. Hanff does a lot of reading. She enjoys a wide variety of fiction, including literary and young adult fiction, but not a lot of genre fiction. “I don't like to make a blanket recommendation with respect to what teens should be reading,” she says, as



The cover of Send.

what people like to read “is very personal.” Students looking for a book to read can talk to her or any other teacher-librarian for a personal recommendation. If you want a book the library doesn't have, you can ask the staff to order it. One book she will recommend to everyone, though, is *Send*, teacher-librarian Mr. Capilongo's latest book of poetry.